The United States Reference Manual

The 1910 Single Line USPS Watermark Flat Plate Two Cents Coil, Perf 12 Vertically, Scott 388

The 1910 2¢ carmine coil, perf 12 vertically, differs from its predecessor, Scott 353, in that the paper on which this stamp is printed shows a single line USPS watermark instead of the old double line watermark.

As with the sheet stamps and horizontal coil stamps, the change to a smaller, single line watermark was made to strengthen the paper.

These stamps were printed by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, which later reported that they were first issued on November 1, 1910; the earliest recorded usage is January 4, 1911.

Double line watermark *Single line watermark*

(Note that only a portion of one or more letters will be seen on any one stamp.)

Because of the large number of perf holes and the resultant weakness of the paper between the holes, these perf 12 coils broke apart too easily in the coiling and affixing machines, so this issue was replaced less than two months after its issuance by the sturdier perf 8-1/2 coils.

As with Scott 332, these coils were produced from sheets printed by the old plates as well as new Star plates. This was done to cut down on waste caused by shrinkage, which affected the outside stamps on the plates more than the inside; so 3mm spacing was built into the six outside rows on each side, while the eight center rows had 2mm spacing between stamps. So, more 2mm spaced pairs were produced. Mint and used 3mm multiples are slightly more valuable than 2mm multiples.

The 2¢ perf vertically coil is much scarcer and more valuable than the perf horizontally coil (#386) because users of the stamp affixing machines for which the coils were intended preferred the vertically perfed coils. Thus, fewer mint examples were available to collectors; and used examples were not saved.

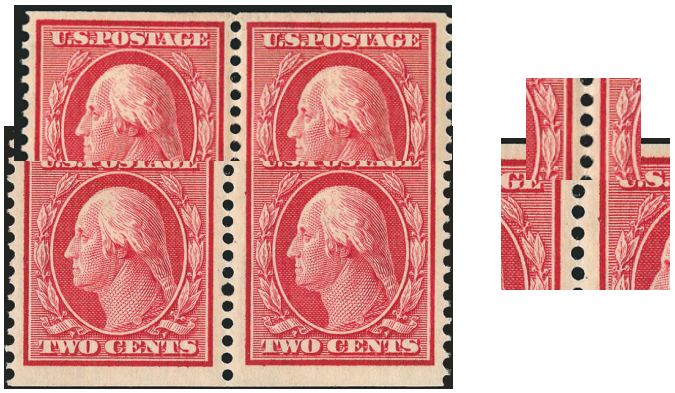
This stamp also carries much higher catalogue values than those for the double line coil, so it is worth checking the watermark to avoid misidentification. In particular, used values are scarce, and there is only one known used line pair. Keep in mind that used values are for usage during the period of general usage of the issue, not for later uses created to convert mint stamps to used versions to capitalize on the higher used values.

This stamp is one of the most faked of all U.S. issues. When fakes are manufactured, the source material is either the double line imperf, Sc. 384, or the sheet stamp, Sc. 375. In the former instance, vertical perfs are added; in the latter, the horizontal perfs are trimmed off.

Unless you are an expert, Scott 388 should not be purchased without a certificate from an authoritative expert committee.

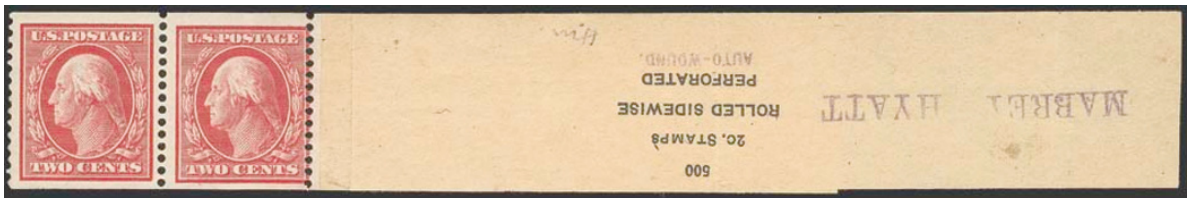
File Page:
1.0388.1.100.100
09/23/11

January 4, 1911 earliest documented use of Sc. 388, tied to a window envelope of the H. A. Meldrum Co., tied by a full Buffalo, N.Y. machine cancel.



A cross section of a pair with 2mm spacing laid over a pair with 3mm spacing

The unique Sc. 388 used coil line pair.



A Sc. 388 coil pair with a rare lead-in strip from end of coil roll.

[Click here to order the Washington-Franklin Heads Part 1 Manual](#).